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Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1.-104. (canceled)

105. (new) An antimicrobial composite comprising a first, liquid-permeable layer and a second layer arranged on the first layer, wherein an antimicrobial metal in elemental form is present between the first and second layers as a coating on at least one of the surfaces of the first and second layers and substantially no antimicrobial metal in elemental form is present on exterior surfaces of the composite.

106. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the first layer comprises a foramenous material.

107. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the first layer comprises at least one of a hole and a mesh structure.

108. (new) The composite of claim 106, wherein the first layer comprises at least one of a perforated film and a mesh.

109. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the first layer comprises an organic

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polymer.

110. (new) The composite of claim 109, wherein the organic polymer comprises a polyolefin.

111. (new) The composite of claim 110, wherein the polyolefin comprises at least one of polyethylene and polypropylene.

112. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the first layer comprises a polyethylene mesh.

113. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the first layer comprises openings having a size of from about 250 μm to about 1400 μm .

114. (new) The composite of claim 112, wherein the polyethylene mesh comprises openings having a size of from about 400 μm to about 700 μm .

115. (new) The composite of claim 114, wherein the openings have a substantially triangular shape.

116. (new) The composite of claim 113, wherein the openings provide an open area of from about 15 % to about 60 % of the surface area of the first layer.

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117. (new) The composite of claim 106, wherein the first layer has a thickness of from about 0.02 mm to about 0.8 mm.

118. (new) The composite of claim 107, wherein the first layer has a thickness of from about 0.05 mm to about 0.5 mm.

119. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the second layer is one of a liquid-permeable layer and a liquid-absorbing layer.

120. (new) The composite of claim 108, wherein the second layer comprises at least one of a perforated film and a mesh.

121. (new) The composite of claim 106, wherein the second layer comprises an organic polymer.

122. (new) The composite of claim 121, wherein the organic polymer comprises a polyolefin.

123. (new) The composite of claim 108, wherein the second layer comprises a polyethylene mesh.

124. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the second layer has a thickness of

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from about 0.02 mm to about 2.5 mm.

125. (new) The composite of claim 119, wherein the second layer is a liquid-absorbing layer.

126. (new) The composite of claim 125, wherein the liquid-absorbing layer has a liquid-absorbing capacity of from about 300 g/m² to about 2000 g/m².

127. (new) The composite of claim 126, wherein the liquid-absorbing capacity is from about 400 g/m² to about 1000 g/m².

128. (new) The composite of claim 125, wherein the second layer comprises a textile sheet.

129. (new) The composite of claim 128, wherein the textile sheet comprises at least one of a nonwoven, a fleece, a fabric, a knit and a felt.

130. (new) The composite of claim 125, wherein the second layer comprises at least one of fibers and yarns.

131. (new) The composite of claim 129, wherein the second layer comprises at least one of viscose, polyolefin and polyester.

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132. (new) The composite of claim 129, wherein the second layer comprises at least one of polyethylene and polypropylene.

133. (new) The composite of claim 125, wherein the second layer has a thickness of from about 0.3 mm to about 2.4 mm.

134. (new) The composite of claim 128, wherein the second layer has a thickness of from about 0.5 mm to about 1.4 mm.

135. (new) The composite of claim 125, wherein the second layer has an area weight of from about 80 g/m² to about 200 g/m².

136. (new) The composite of claim 135, wherein the second layer comprises a superabsorber.

137. (new) The composite of claim 136, wherein the superabsorber comprises a polymer having recurring units derived from acrylic acid and derivatives thereof.

138. (new) The composite of claim 137, wherein the superabsorber is present in an amount of from about 0.01 % to about 40 % by weight, based on the second layer.

139. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the antimicrobial metal comprises at

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least one of Ag, Au, Pd, Pt, Cu, Ir, Zn, Sn, Sb, Bi and alloys comprising one or more of these metals.

140. (new) The composite of claim 106, wherein the antimicrobial metal comprises Ag and alloys thereof.

141. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the composite has a sheet-like structure.

142. (new) The composite of claim 141, wherein the antimicrobial metal is present in an amount of from about 1 mg/m² to about 1 g/m².

143. (new) The composite of claim 142, wherein the antimicrobial metal comprises at least one of Ag, Cu, Zn and an alloy of one or more of these metals.

144. (new) The composite of claim 142, wherein the antimicrobial metal comprises silver and is present in an amount of from about 10 mg/m² to about 600 mg/m².

145. (new) The composite of claim 144, wherein the silver is present in an amount of from about 50 mg/m² to about 450 mg/m².

146. (new) The composite of claim 145, wherein the silver is present in an amount of

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from about 60 mg/m² to about 80 mg/m².

147. (new) The composite of claim 107, wherein the first layer has a silver coating on a surface thereof which faces the second layer.

148. (new) The composite of claim 107, wherein the second layer has a silver coating on a surface thereof which faces the first layer.

149. (new) The composite of claim 147, wherein an intermediate layer is arranged between the silver coating and the first layer.

150. (new) The composite of claim 149, wherein the intermediate layer comprises aluminum.

151. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the first layer is coated with aluminum on one side thereof.

152. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the composite has an area weight of from about 50 g/m² to about 300 g/m².

153. (new) The composite of claim 144, wherein the composite has an area weight of from about 80 g/m² to about 160 g/m².

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154. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the composite has a thickness of from about 0.4 mm to about 2.5 mm.

155. (new) The composite of claim 144, wherein the composite has a thickness of from about 0.5 mm to about 1.4 mm.

156. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the composite shows a peeling strength of from about 0.05 N/cm to about 1.5 N/cm.

157. (new) The composite of claim 153, wherein the composite shows a peeling strength of from about 0.15 N/cm to about 0.8 N/cm.

158. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the composite shows a maximum tensile strength of from about 10 N/cm to about 40 N/cm.

159. (new) The composite of claim 142, wherein the composite shows a 24-hour release of the antimicrobial metal of from about 0.05 mg/m² to about 3 mg/m².

160. (new) The composite of claim 144, wherein the composite shows a 24-hour release of the silver of from about 0.1 mg/m² to about 2 mg/m².

161. (new) The composite of claim 153, wherein the composite has a size of at least

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about 0.5 cm².

162. (new) The composite of claim 161, wherein the composite has a size of not more than about 1 m².

163. (new) An antimicrobial composite comprising a first, liquid-permeable layer and a second, liquid-absorbing layer on the first layer, wherein the first layer comprises a coating of elemental silver on a side which faces the second layer, the second layer comprises a nonwoven which comprises at least one of polyethylene, polypropylene, polyester and viscose, and wherein substantially no silver metal is present on exterior surfaces of the composite.

164. (new) The composite of claim 163, wherein the first layer comprises a polyethylene mesh.

165. (new) The composite of claim 163, wherein the first layer has a thickness of from about 0.05 mm to about 0.5 mm.

166. (new) The composite of claim 165, wherein the second layer has a thickness of from about 0.5 mm to about 1.4 mm.

167. (new) The composite of claim 164, wherein the second layer has a liquid-absorbing

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capacity of from about 400 g/m² to about 800 g/m².

168. (new) The composite of claim 166, wherein the second layer has an area weight of from about 80 g/m² to about 150 g/m².

169. (new) The composite of claim 163, wherein the silver is present in an amount of from about 50 mg/m² to about 450 mg/m².

170. (new) The composite of claim 163, wherein an aluminum coating is arranged between the silver coating and the first layer.

171. (new) The composite of claim 163, wherein the composite has an area weight of from about 80 g/m² to about 160 g/m².

172. (new) The composite of claim 171, wherein the composite has a thickness of from about 0.4 mm to about 2.5 mm.

173. (new) The composite of claim 171, wherein the composite shows a 24-hour release of silver of from about 0.1 mg/m² to about 2 mg/m².

174. (new) A wound covering article comprising the composite of claim 105.

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175. (new) A wound covering article comprising the composite of claim 163.

176. (new) The article of claim 174, which is one of a wound dressing, a compress, and a bandage.

177. (new) An antimicrobial skin care article which comprises the composite of claim 105.

178. (new) An antimicrobial skin care article which comprises the composite of claim 163.

179. (new) A diaper which comprises the composite of claim 105.

180. (new) An antimicrobial composite comprising a first, liquid-permeable layer and a second layer arranged on the first layer, wherein a layer which comprises an antimicrobial metal in elemental form is present between the first and second layers and substantially no antimicrobial metal in elemental form is present on exterior surfaces of the composite.

181. (new) The composite of claim 180, wherein the first layer comprises a foramenous material.

182. (new) The composite of claim 180, wherein the first layer comprises at least one of

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a hole and a mesh structure.

183. (new) The composite of claim 181, wherein the first layer comprises at least one of a perforated film and a mesh.

184. (new) The composite of claim 180, wherein the first layer comprises an organic polymer.

185. (new) The composite of claim 184, wherein the organic polymer comprises at least one of polyethylene and polypropylene.

186. (new) The composite of claim 105, wherein the first layer comprises openings having a size of from about 250 μm to about 1400 μm .

187. (new) The composite of claim 181, wherein the first layer has a thickness of from about 0.02 mm to about 0.8 mm.

188. (new) The composite of claim 184, wherein the second layer is one of a liquid-permeable layer and a liquid-absorbing layer.

189. (new) The composite of claim 188, wherein the second layer comprises an organic polymer.

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190. (new) The composite of claim 188, wherein the second layer has a thickness of from about 0.02 mm to about 2.5 mm.

191. (new) The composite of claim 188, wherein the second layer is a liquid-absorbing layer.

192. (new) The composite of claim 191, wherein the liquid-absorbing layer has a liquid-absorbing capacity of from about 300 g/m² to about 2000 g/m².

193. (new) The composite of claim 191, wherein the second layer comprises a textile sheet.

194. (new) The composite of claim 193, wherein the second layer has an area weight of from about 80 g/m² to about 200 g/m².

195. (new) The composite of claim 180, wherein the second layer comprises a superabsorber.

196. (new) The composite of claim 195, wherein the superabsorber is present in an amount of from about 0.01 % to about 40 % by weight, based on the second layer.

197. (new) The composite of claim 180, wherein the antimicrobial metal comprises at

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least one of Ag, Au, Pd, Pt, Cu, Ir, Zn, Sn, Sb, Bi and alloys comprising one or more of these metals.

198. (new) The composite of claim 197, wherein the antimicrobial metal comprises Ag and alloys thereof.

199. (new) The composite of claim 180, wherein the composite has a sheet-like structure.

200. (new) The composite of claim 199, wherein the antimicrobial metal comprises silver and is present in an amount of from about 10 mg/m² to about 600 mg/m².

201. (new) The composite of claim 200, wherein the silver is present in an amount of from about 60 mg/m² to about 80 mg/m².

202. (new) The composite of claim 180, wherein the composite has an area weight of from about 50 g/m² to about 300 g/m².

203. (new) The composite of claim 202, wherein the composite has a thickness of from about 0.4 mm to about 2.5 mm.

204. (new) The composite of claim 203, wherein the composite shows a peeling

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strength of from about 0.05 N/cm to about 1.5 N/cm.

205. (new) The composite of claim 203, wherein the composite shows a maximum tensile strength of from about 10 N/cm to about 40 N/cm.

206. (new) The composite of claim 108, wherein the composite shows a 24-hour release of the antimicrobial metal of from about 0.05 mg/m² to about 3 mg/m².

207. (new) An antimicrobial composite comprising a first, liquid-permeable layer and a second, liquid-absorbing layer arranged on the first layer, wherein silver in elemental form is present between the first and second layers as a coating on at least a surface of the first layer and substantially no silver metal is present on exterior surfaces of the composite, and wherein the first layer comprises at least one of a hole and a mesh structure and is coated with aluminum on at least the surface thereof which is coated with silver.

208. (new) An antimicrobial composite comprising a first, liquid-permeable layer and a second layer arranged on the first layer, wherein silver in elemental form is present between the first and second layers as a coating on a surface of the first layer and substantially no silver metal is present on exterior surfaces of the composite, wherein the first layer comprises an aluminum coating under the silver coating, and wherein the first layer has a thickness of from about 0.02 mm to about 0.8 mm.